

Six-month checkup time!

It is important to check your baby's growth and development often because she is changing so fast. Write down any questions you have now, so you can ask them at the checkup.

Immunizations at six months

Vaccines are given to babies because the diseases they prevent often strike at an early age. An infant who gets a vaccine-preventable disease may have serious health problems that can last the rest of his life. For the earliest and best protection, your baby needs to complete each vaccine series on time.

The following vaccines are recommended at the 6-month checkup:

- Rotavirus (RV)
- Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTaP)
- *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib)
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)
- Influenza (flu)

Your baby may also get a third dose of hepatitis B (HepB) and inactivated poliovirus (IPV).

Protect your baby this flu season

This will be the first flu season your baby can get flu vaccine. He will need two doses about a month apart. The vaccine provides protection throughout the flu season. Infants and young children who get the flu are more likely to develop complications and be hospitalized. Make sure everyone who has contact with your baby is vaccinated against flu.

Keep your baby's Lifetime Immunization Record card in a safe place and bring it to every visit. You will need this record for child care and school.

Early relationships matter

The relationships your baby is forming with you and her other caregivers will affect the rest of her life. Your baby needs adults that have close, caring relationships with her and meet her physical needs. Remember:

- Your baby has feelings! She needs to feel loved, wanted, welcome, and special.
- All your baby's caregivers should respond quickly when she cries.
- Your baby learns by playing and interacting with the adults who take care of her.

Each baby develops at his or her own pace. You know your baby best. If you have any questions or concerns about her development, talk with your doctor or nurse. You may also call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 for the Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) in your area. An FRC will talk with you about your concerns and help you find local services to check your baby's progress.

New teeth coming in

Between 6 and 12 months, your baby may show signs of new teeth. Your baby may have red tender gums and he may not eat or sleep well. To soothe sore gums:

- Offer a cold (not frozen) teething ring to chew on.
- Offer a clean, cold, damp washcloth to chew on.
- Rub your baby's gums with a clean finger.

Do not use teething gels. If nothing in the list above helps, ask your child's doctor or dentist for advice.

Clean your baby's teeth and gums at least twice a day and before bed. Use a moist cloth or a small soft toothbrush with no toothpaste. Avoid sharing toothbrushes and eating utensils with your baby. You or your older children can pass germs that may cause tooth decay to your baby through saliva.

Keeping Your Baby Healthy and Safe

Tips for starting solid foods

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for at least one year. Breastmilk still provides your baby great nourishment, disease protection, comfort, and security. Breastmilk or formula will be your baby's main form of nutrition for the first year. Give him all the breastmilk or formula he wants before offering food from a spoon.



You'll know your baby is ready for solid food when he can sit up well with support, control his head movement, and swallow food from a spoon, at about six months old.

Offer baby a wide variety of healthy foods. Strained pureed meats or iron fortified cereals are good first foods. Mix the meat or single-grain cereals, such as rice, oatmeal, or barley with breastmilk or formula. Make the mixture thin at first.

At first, offer your baby a small amount of solid food, one to four tablespoons, once a day. Gradually increase to two to three times per day. He will let you know when he has had enough to eat. He may close his mouth tightly, turn his head away, spit out food, or shake his head.

Introduce only one new food a week. If your baby vomits or has a rash or diarrhea, stop giving him that food and call the doctor or nurse. If there is no reaction, continue that food for a week before introducing another.

Try avocado, banana, and cooked sweet potato, squash, or peas next. Foods should be peeled and mashed until smooth. Serve at room temperature or slightly warmed, not too hot! Don't feed your baby peanut butter or egg whites (because they can cause an allergic reaction), or foods made with honey (because of bacteria that causes botulism) until he is at least 12 months old.

Encourage your baby to move

Crawling, rolling, and wiggling across the floor build your baby's brain and muscles. Give her plenty of tummy time when she's awake and when you can watch her. Get down on the floor and play with her. Put toys just out of reach so she can try to move toward them. Your baby may take longer to crawl or move on her own if she spends a lot of time in play seats, playpens, car seats, strollers, or swings.



Help your baby fall asleep

A regular bedtime routine may help your baby settle down more easily. This could include giving your baby a bath, changing his diaper, quiet playtime, and reading a book. Cuddle him and put him in his crib before he gets too tired. He may like to suck a pacifier for comfort.

To help prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), everyone who cares for your baby should put him to sleep on his back at nap and bed times.

Baby-proofing tips

Baby-proofing your house can reduce the chance of injury, but you or an adult you trust always needs to be close by, watching your baby. Make sure her other caregivers baby-proof their homes.

- ✓ Your baby is beginning to crawl and roll around. Get down on your hands and knees often to notice things your baby could find or reach.
- ✓ Clean the floor often. Pick up things she may try to put in her mouth. She could choke on a penny, button, balloon, plastic bag, or older child's small toy.
- ✓ Always keep at least one hand on your baby when she is on a bed, sofa, or changing table.
- ✓ Put breakable things out of reach.
- ✓ Use safety cover plates that cover the whole outlet.
- ✓ Keep cords, such as those on window shades, phones, and lamps, out of reach or taped to the wall. Babies can be strangled by cords. They can also pull things down on themselves.
- ✓ Put safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs. Also put gates in doorways to rooms that are not child-proofed. Keep gates closed and latched.
- ✓ Store all cleaners, poisons, vitamins, and medicines on a high shelf in a locked closet or cabinet. Put latches on drawers and cupboard doors.
- ✓ Keep your baby away from the stove, oven, and microwave when hot food is being taken out.
- ✓ Make sure you have at least one working smoke detector and one working carbon monoxide detector in your home. Check them monthly and change the battery as directed in the instructions.

Baby walkers are dangerous

Walkers are never safe to use, even with an adult close by. Most walker injuries happen while adults are watching. It's hard for parents or caregivers to move quickly enough to prevent them. A child in a walker can move more than three feet in one second! Instead of a walker, try a stationary activity center which has no wheels.